

REMARKS

Prior to this Reply, Claims 1-6, 8-15, 19, 21 and 22 were pending. Through this Reply, Claim 21 has been amended, while Claim 22 has been cancelled. Furthermore, Claim 23 has been added. Accordingly, Claims 1-6, 8-15, 19, 21 and 23 are now at issue in the present case.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

In the Office Action, the Examiner indicated that Claims 1-6, 8-15 and 19 were allowed. Applicants have not amended such claims. Accordingly, Applicants still believe that such claims are allowable.

The Examiner objected to Claim 22 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. However, the Examiner indicated that such claim would be allowable if it was written in independent form to include all of the limitations of its base claim and any intervening claims.

In response, Applicants have amended Claim 21 to include the limitations of Claim 22, which has now been cancelled. Applicants note, however, that Claim 21 has been broadened by striking a phrase in such claim. Applicants believe that Claim 21 is patentably distinguishable from the cited references.

Applicants have added Claim 23, which depends from Claim 21. Claim 23 includes the phrase that was stricken from Claim 21 via the present amendment. Applicants believe that Claim 23 is patentably distinguishable from the cited references.

II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner rejected Claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,097,568 to Ekhoﬀ. In addition, the Examiner rejected Claim 21 under 35 U.S.C.

§ 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,140,578 to Tohkairin. Applicants submit that the rejections are now moot in view of the amendment to Claim 21.

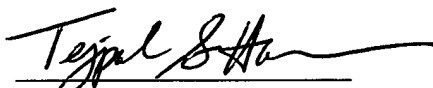
III. Conclusion

Applicants believe that no additional fees are due. Nevertheless, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-2198 for any fee deficiencies associated with filing this paper.

Applicants believe that the application appears to be in form for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance thereof is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number regarding any matters relating to the present application.

Respectfully submitted,



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